

HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE
MONTANA NATIONAL GUARD
TECHNICIAN & AGR BULLETIN

OCTOBER NO: 00-10

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QUALITY PAYS THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS
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WELCOME!!!

The Human Resources Office would like to welcome SGT Timothy McCoy to our staff. SGT McCoy joins the AGR Branch as the Senior Personnel Sergeant. We welcome you to the HRO!

IT IS NOT the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory or defeat.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT (1858-1919)
26TH U.S. President

AWARDS

There will be a short delay in processing Star Awards for both Army and Air National Guard personnel. The HRO has received new codes to process these and we are working on getting them in the correct order to use in our personnel system. We apologize for the delay and hope to be up and running soon.

Please feel free to call TSG Robert Gregori at 841-3131 if you have questions or concerns.

***SUPERVISORS & KEY PERSONNEL:** Please be sure to print a copy of the HRO Bulletin for your subordinates. Thanks!

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY NEWS:

SEEM: Anne Maroney, Phone: 841-3117

EEO COUNSELORS:

Army (Helena):

Ronda Scott, Phone: 841-3291

Tom Mahoney, Phone: 841-3066

Linda Kortum, Phone 841-3452

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Mark Reagor, Phone 791-6343
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“WE CAN EMBRACE OUR DIVERSITY, FIND STRENGTH IN IT, AND PROSPER TOGETHER, OR WE CAN FOCUS ON OUR DIFFERENCES AND TRY TO RESTRICT ACCESS TO RESOURCES BY MEMBERS OF ETHNIC AND RACIAL GROUPS DIFFERENT FROM OURS AND LIMIT PROSPERITY FOR ALL.”

ANDREW YOUNG, 1996

I would like to congratulate Ronda Scott and Tom Mahoney on their completion of the EEO Counselors Course at Cocoa Beach. Great Job.

Do you think you might have what it takes to become an EEO Counselor if so contact Anne Maroney, DSN 747-3117.

The following is interesting reading:

Catholic Denied Mass In Army Chapel

Washington Times
October 10, 2000
Pg. 7

By Rowan Scarborough, The Washington Times

The U.S. Army in Europe will not allow traditional Catholics to use a base chapel, although the military has opened similar facilities around the world for witchcraft and pagan rituals.

The officer seeking to use the chapel blames the denial on a ``politically correct Army.”

But an Army spokesman says the branch's European command does not want to pay the cost of hiring a priest when personnel can go off base to churches where Mass is conducted in Latin. Catholics have the option of attending Mass that is celebrated in the vernacular, meaning the local language, or in Latin. The vernacular is the most common choice.

Lt. Col. David L. Sonnier, an information management officer, said in an interview that his request was turned down by Lt. Gen. Larry R. Jordan, deputy Army European commander. Col. Sonnier serves at the NATO Support Activity, a small Army base in Brussels that provides logistics and personnel support for the U.S. delegation to NATO headquarters in Brussels.

The colonel says the chapel hosts two Protestant services weekly. He said he was told that Gen. Jordan refused the Catholics' request because he feared a multitude of other religious groups then would want chapel time.

``Just let us have access to it," said Col. Sonnier, estimating that 20 Catholics want the service. ``All we want is the Army to allow us to use chapels like the Wiccans and pagans. . This is politically correct to an extreme when pagans and Wiccans are allowed into a chapel and traditional Catholics are blocked entry."

The Army says it's not a question of access, but of cost. The pagan sects supply their own ministers. ``In order to (have a Catholic priest say a Latin Mass), the Army would have to contract out to a private priest," said Col. Carl Kropf, a spokesman in Heidelberg, Germany. No Catholic Army chaplain was available.

Col. Kropf said Gen. Jordan ``didn't deny the use of the chapel, which someone may have alleged. But he wasn't going to let the contract for something that is available elsewhere. It's a resource issue."

The colonel denied that Gen. Jordan is concerned that many other religious groups subsequently will want chapel space. ``I think this is a situation where a service is available in the local community that serves the needs of the people."

Col. Kropf said the Army suffers ``a tremendous shortage of Catholic chaplains in particular."

On the cost issue, Col. Sonnier said: ``They don't have to pay. We made that clear. That's not an excuse. If the Army doesn't pay the cost for a priest, I will. Also other members of the community. What is their next excuse?"

He estimated the weekly cost at \$120.

Col. Sonnier, a 19-year officer who is married and has five children, has written to Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, Mississippi Republican, seeking his help. Col. Sonnier, a Mississippi native, was nominated to West Point by Mr. Lott.

``One has to wonder whether the same standards that were applied for the pagans and wiccans are being applied in our case," the colonel wrote, adding:

``It appears that serious, orthodox Catholics in good standing within their denominations are now being denied access to the chapels by military leaders who supposedly want to avoid having too many different religious services.

``I am quite certain that our fellow Mississippians will be interested in keeping their children away from the recruiting stations until our morally disoriented military undergoes some serious reform."

The colonel says he gained approval for Latin chapel services from Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien of the U.S. Military Archdiocese, and Cardinal Godfried Danneels of the Archdiocese of Mechelen- Brussels. Permission from the Catholic hierarchy is required before Latin Masses may be celebrated rather than the more common vernacular Mass.

As Col. Kropf pointed out, ``The Catholic service for people in the U.S. and Europe is an English- based service. That's what you get when you are in Fairfax, Virginia."

Archbishop O'Brien's Washington office said he was traveling and unavailable for comment.

Defense Department regulations urge commanders to accommodate different religious groups: ``Commanders should provide for the faith needs of all service members and accommodate their requests to conduct religious observances on military installations when these observances will not adversely impact military readiness, unit cohesion, or standards of good order and discipline or violate health or safety standards."

A July 9 article in Stars and Stripes, a newspaper for military people, said Army pagans in Mannheim, Germany, have the keys to a base chapel where they hold regular gatherings.

Col. Kropf said the chapel in question is excess property, and there is no extra cost in providing the building.

The military's tolerance of Wiccans and pagans became national news in 1999, when it was reported that the Army base at Fort Hood, Texas, the largest U.S. base, provided a Wiccan coven a campsite to hold regular ceremonies.

The military's 20-year-old chaplain handbook recognizes more than 200 religious faiths, including Wiccans, the Church of Satan and Rastafarians.

Col. Sonnier said his research shows that at least 12 military bases worldwide host pagan or Wiccan ceremonies.

PERSONNEL SYSTEMS MANAGER:

There is a new date for the deployment of the new Personnel System: Aug 2001

Have you, as a supervisor ever wanted a report on your personnel with information such as: Name/SSAN/Date of Birth/Years of Service. Etc. and never knew who to request this information from well it is the PSM Office, ext DSN 747-3117.

POC: Anne Maroney

SECTION II – LABOR RELATIONS **SMS ROGER HAGAN**

Election Time Is Near...Remember The Rules

It is getting to be that time of the year again, when you hear more promises made on TV than you did from your kids last December, just before Santa came. That can only be the time we have grown to love and hate...election time. As a federal employee (i.e. Technician) you have some limitations on what you can and cannot do while participating in the election process. Now don't take this article to mean that you shouldn't be involved in your community by taking an active part in our political process, just understand that there is a thing out there called the *Hatch Act* that applies to you as a federal employee.

The Hatch Act restricts the political activity of executive branch employees of the federal government, the District of Columbia government and certain state and local agencies. In 1993, Congress passed legislation that substantially amended the Hatch Act, allowing most federal and D.C. employees to engage in many types of political activity. (These amendments did not change the provisions applying to state and local employees.) With the 1993 amendments, most federal and D.C. government employees are now permitted to take an active part in political management or in political campaigns. However, some federal agencies and categories of employees continue to be prohibited from engaging in partisan political activity.

Ref: 5 U.S.C. chapter 73, subchapter III, as amended; 5 C.F.R. Part 733; 5 C.F.R. Part 734

Do's and Don'ts for Federal Employees Who May Engage in Partisan Political Activity

Federal Hatch Act Do's

Federal employees ***may***-

- be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections register and vote as they choose
 - assist in voter registration drives
 - express opinions about candidates and issues
 - contribute money to political organizations
 - attend political fundraising functions
 - attend and be active at political rallies and meetings
 - join and be an active member of a political party or club
 - sign nominating petitions
 - campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, municipal ordinances
 - campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections
 - make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
 - distribute campaign literature in partisan elections
 - hold office in political clubs or parties
-

Federal Hatch Act Don'ts

Federal employees ***may not***-

- use official authority or influence to interfere with an election
- solicit or discourage political activity of anyone with business before their agency
- solicit or receive political contributions (may be done in certain limited situations by federal labor or other employee organizations)
- be candidates for public office in partisan elections
- engage in political activity while:
 - on duty
 - in a government office
 - wearing an official uniform
 - using a government vehicle
- wear partisan political buttons on duty

Federal employees should also be aware that certain political activities may also be criminal offenses under title 18 of the U.S. Code. See 18 U.S.C. §§ 210, 211, 594, 595, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 610.

For more information on the Hatch Act, visit the Office of Special Counsel web site at - www.osc.gov

ETHICS IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

There is always something in the newspapers about Federal officials violations of ethics rules, either accused or proven. Most generally it is about an elected official, but just because you seldom read about a Federal employee being charged with ethics violations doesn't mean that it isn't happening. All Federal employees of the executive branch (that's us technicians!) are covered by Part 2635 of 5 Code of Federal Regulations (5 CFR), which is titled "Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch". I have listed some of the basic ethics standards that we are subject to. Please review them and insure that you conform to their intent. Supervisors, please insure that each of your employees read this article.

BASIC OBLIGATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE:

a. *Public service is a public trust.* To ensure that every citizen can have complete confidence in the integrity of the Federal Government, each employee shall respect and adhere to the principles of ethical conduct set forth in this section, as well as the implementing standards contained in this part and in supplemental agency regulations.

b. *General principles.* The following general principles apply to every employee and may form the basis for the standards contained in this part.

(1) Public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws and ethical principles above private gain.

(2) Employees shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.

(3) Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.

(4) An employee shall not solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the employee's agency, or whose interest may be substantially affected by performance or nonperformance of the employee's duties.

(5) Employees shall put forth honest effort in performance of their duties.

(6) Employees shall not knowingly make unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the Government.

(7) Employees shall not use public office for private gain.

(8) Employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.

(9) Employees shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.

(10) Employees shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official Government duties and responsibilities.

(11) Employees shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.

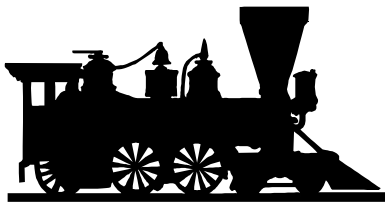
(12) Employee shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those - such as Federal, State, or local taxes - that are imposed by law.

(13) Employees shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.

(14) Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards set forth in this part. Whether particular circumstances create an appearance that the law or these standards have been violated shall be determined from the perspective of a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts.

These are the basic rules that should be our guide in everything we do related to our employment as a National Guard Technician. If any of your conduct or outside activities could possibly be construed as violating this regulation, you should discuss it with your supervisor. If you still are not certain that you are not violating some ethical rules, please call SMSgt Roger A. Hagan at DSN 747-3118 or (406) 841-3118.

SECTION III – EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT MSG KEITH KELLY



TRAINing & Development

Personal Development by MSgt Keith J. Kelly Employee Development Specialist

Do you want to know a sure fire secret to upward mobility, and even success in your current position? Personal Development can pay great dividends in making you a viable candidate for future job bids. It also keeps you current and looking ahead in the direction technology and procedures are headed in your current job.

Those of us that are in dual status positions have a lot of leeway in coming up with opportunities for training and development. The Army and Air Educations offices stand ready to assist us in finding schools and courses that augment our military and civilian knowledge. They can even provide CLEP/DANTES testing to document your current knowledge.

There are many options for us to use, Military Service Schools, Federal and State Agency courses, Universities and Technical Schools, Commercial Training vendors, even trade catalogs. If you find training that directly relates to your

civilian job I can often find funding to allow you to attend a course. But be aware we expect a return on our investment with a continued service agreement of NLT three times the length of the course.

If you want to go places with your career in the Montana National Guard you need to take a proactive role in your own personal/professional development. Discuss training issues with your supervisor during your annual performance appraisal, block II of the DMAMT Form 690-430-1E allows for the identification of classes/course during a rating period. Be on the look out for opportunities to hone your skills and add to your knowledge base. Bring these opportunities up to your supervisor, perhaps your entire section could benefit. Keep in mind we want you to have skills that support our state and federal missions. If you show the initiative to direct your career your supervisors will reward you with new challenges and opportunity to prove yourself.

As always I am here to assist you in achieving your professional development and provide career counseling. I am interested in the success of each technician and will be glad to help in any way.

SECTION IV – EMPLOYEE RELATIONS/SERVICES

**TSG ROBERT GREGORI
SSG SHARON KABERLINE**

FEDAMERICA ADVERTISEMENT

Following is an advertisement for “Fed America”. An information resource about federal benefits.

Many of you have been sending us emails asking about our FREE Handbooks and Guides, so we thought we'd send you a list of the most popular Handbooks available for FREE downloading, printing and online viewing!

In the coming weeks, we're planning to add new FREE handbooks on Retirement Planning, Trust and Estate Planning and many more! All FREE.

Although our publications are available FREE to every federal and postal employee, it's YOU, the fedamerica.com email newsletter subscriber who learns about them first!

Isn't it time you tell a friend about our FREE email newsletters (FEDreport.com and FEDtechnology.com) so they can benefit from all the FREE handbooks and information?

They will thank you for it! And so will we! <http://www.fedamerica.com> - It's Where Feds Go First!

FREE Handbooks and Guides available on FedAmerica.com:

1. Pay Manual

2. Competing for Federal Jobs
3. Career Transition Handbook
4. Retention & Recruitment Bonuses Relocation Allowances
5. People with Disabilities in the Federal Government
6. Veterans' Guide to Employment in the Federal Government
7. Alternative Dispute Resolution: A Resource Guide
8. New Federal Travel Card Rules
9. Federal Leave Facts
10. OPM Sick Leave Policy
11. New Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Rules
12. OPM Guide for Implementing Child Care Legislation
13. New Regulation for People with Psychiatric Disabilities
14. Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Handbook
15. Long-Term Care Insurance Q and A Guide - 16 Pages
16. 2001 FEHB Premium Rates Non-Postal - 35 Pages
17. 2001 FEHB Premium Rates Postal - 27 Pages
18. 2001 FEHB Premium Rates DoD Demonstration - 5 Pages
19. Questions on FEHB Conversion - 27 Page Handbook
20. Frequently Asked Questions on Pre-taxed FEHB benefit
21. Updated FEGLI Guide
22. 2000 Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Handbook
23. 2000 Vet Benefits Guide
24. TRICARE Handbook
25. Tax Retirement Handbook
26. CSRS/FERS Retirement Handbook
27. 20-Page Report: Meeting Work and Family Obligations
28. A Brief Wrap on Ethics - 21 page Handbook
29. OPM Policy on the Personal Use of Government Equipment
30. Workforce Diversity Guide
31. Revised SES Regulations
32. Policy Guidance on Genetic Information
33. New OSC Whistleblower Protections
34. 66-Page Post-Election Transition Handbook
35. Supervisor's Handbook on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse
36. New Rules - Government Paperwork Elimination Act
37. GSA Report on Electronic Commerce
38. DoC 2000-2005 Draft Strategic Plan for Stakeholder
39. 55-Page Guide to Strategically Planning Training

All of these Handbooks and Guides are FREE! Just go to our website today and download your own FREE copies!

Visit <http://www.fedamerica.com> TODAY!

MILITARY LEAVE OPTIONS FOR TECHNICIAN

National Guard Technicians have more than one type of Military Leave available to them when serving their country. The order of usage for the different types of leave depends on various factors, including but not limited to, the type of duty to be performed, the area of the duty (i.e. CONUS/OCONUS), which Title and Section is used to authorize the duty, etc. Once you have determined which type of leave you want to use please notify your supervisor and if possible provide a type of calendar or schedule showing which type of leave you want to use and when.

15 Days Military Leave

Authorized by Section 6323(a) of Title 5 U.S.C. ***Technicians are paid their regular salary for the day and also received their military pay.*** This is the most common type of leave used by technicians and normally on Active Duty for Training days. The amount granted is 15 days per fiscal year, with a maximum carryover of 15 days (no more than 30 days total in any given FY). The Law provides for an annual accrual of 15 days of military leave, without loss of pay or time, “for active duty or engaging in field or coast defense training under sections 502-505 of Title 32 as a Reserve of the armed forces or the National Guard”. It is charged on a calendar day basis and where it is used for a period of active duty it must also be charged for each non-workday falling within the period. There are several other rules dealing with how this leave is charged but due to limited space they will not be discussed in this article. ***NOTE:*** Effective October 5, 1999, the entitlement has been amended to include “inactive duty training (as defined in section 101 of title 37). **The important thing to remember is Military Leave will be charged in whole days, whether or not you perform one or two training sessions.**

Law Enforcement Leave (LEL)

Authorized by Section 6323(b) of title 5 U.S.C., it provides that, subject to 5 U.S. C. 5519, up to 22 days a year of leave may be taken for “the purpose of providing military aid to enforce the law.” Counter drug support would qualify for this form of leave. ***Pay for this leave would be the greater of the technician's salary or the military pay.*** The individual will receive both paycheck, however, the lesser of the two will be recouped by Accounting and Finance. Current policy, based on Comptroller General decisions and supported by Counter Drug Directorate policy, is that Law Enforcement Leave must be exhausted before the regular 15 day Military Leave can be used for performing drug interdiction operations in Title 10 or Title 32 status, which qualify for Law Enforcement Leave under Section 6323(b) of Title 5 U.S.C.

44 Days Additional Military Leave

Section 1039 under 5 U.S.C. authorizes the most recent addition to the Military Leave Options. In order to qualify for this type of military leave, technicians must be placed on active duty (Title 10) without pay orders for the purpose of

performing non-combat operations outside the U.S. and the technician must request the new type of leave. ***The technician is paid his/her regular salary for normal duty days. A separate military order is established outlining all non-workdays and holiday to provide payment for those days.*** This type of leave does not have to be exhausted prior to use of the regular 15 days of Military Leave neither does the regular 15 days of Military Leave have to be exhausted prior to using the additional 44 days. However, commingling rules still apply to using regular military leave. (Note: technicians will be in Title 10 Active duty status during the period of overseas duty and therefore any expense incurred due to injuries which may occur will be payable through line of duty benefits and not technician OWCP benefits.

Recent legislation now allows for the use of Annual and/or Compensatory time prior to exhausting LEL. The important thing to remember is to communicate with your supervisor prior to taking leave as to what your leave status will be so you can avoid any problems with commingling.

This is only a quick overview of the Military Leave available to our technicians. If you have specific questions regarding the usage of this leave for your particular situation, please contact TSG Robert Gregori at (406) 841-3131/DSN 747-3131. Please have a copy of your orders available so specific titles and sections can be noted.

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) open season is from Nov 15, 2000 - Jan 31, 2001. During this open season, you may elect to begin contributing to the TSP, change the amount of your TSP contributions, or allocate TSP contributions to your account among the three investment funds.

You may invest all or any portion of your TSP contributions in any of the three TSP investment funds: the Government Securities Investment (G) Fund, the Common Stock Index Investment (C) Fund, and the Fixed Income Index Investment (F) Fund. This is true whether you are covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) or the Civil Service Retirement system (CSRS).

Who is eligible? You may make a TSP election this open season if your latest appointment to a position covered by FERS or CSRS was made before July 1, 2000 OR if your latest appointment to a position covered by FERS or CSRS was made on or after July 1, 2000 but before January 1, 2001 and you had been eligible to participate in the TSP during a prior open season.

If you stopped your TSP contributions before August 1, 2000, you may resume your contributions this open season. If, however, you stopped your contributions

after July 31, 2000, you may not elect to begin contributing again until the next TSP open season beginning May 15, 2001.

How the investment opportunity affects FERS employees. Your investment election applies to all contributions to your TSP Account, i.e., Employee, Agency Automatic (1%), and Agency Matching contributions. However, even if you are not making Employee Contributions, you may still make a TSP election to invest all or any portion of your Agency Automatic (1%) Contributions in any of the three funds. This is true even if you are not able to make an election to contribute this open season because you stopped contribution after July 31, 2000.

How to make an open season election. To make an open season election, submit a completed Election Form, TSP-1, to the Human Resource Office (HRO). You can obtain this form from the HRO.

When open season elections become effective. If the HRO accepts your election before December 31, 2000, it will be effective January 14, 2001. The paycheck you receive February 03, 2001 (AIR) February 09, 2001 (ARMY) will reflect this election. If you make an open season election after this date, it will be effective on the first day of the first full pay period after it has been accepted by the HRO. For this open season, an election cannot be accepted after January 31, 2001.

Where to get more information about the TSP. The booklet, Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan for Federal Employees," dated July 1995, describes the TSP in detail. If you would like a copy of this Plan Summary, contact the HRO (in Helena extension 3130/3131 and Great Falls extension 2243). Please read it before making a TSP election. It is also available with a "veritable plethora" of information at the TSP website at www.tsp.gov.

Interfund Transfers. Changes made through use of the TSP-1 affect only **payroll contributions**. If you want to make changes to existing funds ***you must do an interfund transfer through the Thriftline or TSP-30.*** ***Likewise interfund transfers do not affect payroll contributions.***

If you have any questions about the TSP contact TSG Robert Gregori/SSG Sharon Kaberline at (406) 841-3131/3130, DSN 747-3131/3130, 120th FW personnel may also contact TSG Lisa Smith at x2243.

Rates of Return were updated on October 10, 2000.

The monthly C, F, and G Fund returns represent the actual total rates of return used in the monthly allocation of earnings to participant accounts. The returns are shown after deduction of accrued TSP administrative expenses. The C and F Fund returns also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees. The most current C, F, and G Fund rates of return are shown

below. Percentages in () are negative. Returns are updated after the monthly allocation of earnings, usually by the 7th business day of the month.

	C Fund	F Fund	G Fund
September 2000	(5.27%)	0.64%	0.49%
Last 12 Months*			
(10/1999 - 9/2000)	13.19%	7.05%	6.54%

* The C, F, and G Fund returns for the last twelve months assume, except for the crediting of earnings, unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month and assume earnings are compounded on a monthly basis.

2001 FEDERAL EMPLOYEES HEALTH BENEFITS (FEHB) OPEN SEASON

An FEHB open season will be held from November 13, 2000 through December 11, 2000.

During open season, any eligible employee who is not currently registered may enroll; and any eligible enrollee may change from one plan to another, from self only to self and family, or make a combination of these changes.

Enrollees who wish to continue their current enrollment do not need to take any action during this open season. However, enrollees whose plans will not be participating in the Program after December 31, 2000, or whose plans dropped an enrollment area having a separate enrollment code, **must**, enroll in a different plan to continue FEHB coverage in 2001 (to date I have not received any notice of local plans changing).

Before open season begins, your current health plan will send you a copy of its brochure and a notice of its 2001 rates. **If you are enrolled in an HMO, be sure to review the brochure carefully to see if there are any changes in the plan's service and enrollment areas that would require any action on your part.**

If you are considering enrolling or making an enrollment change, contact the Human Resources Office or the Remote Designee to obtain a copy of the 2001 FEHB Guide. The Guide contains a comparison chart that gives general information about each plan and shows the biweekly and monthly premium rates, as well as detailed results of the 2000 Customer Satisfaction Survey and the National Committee of Quality Assurance (NCQA) accreditation status of those plans that took the initiative to seek NCQA review.

Do not rely solely on the FEHB Guide when deciding to enroll in or change enrollment to a specific plan. If, after reviewing the FEHB guide, you decide you

are interested in making an enrollment change, consult the plans' brochure for that plan.

How to Enroll or Make an Enrollment Change during Open Season:

Employees who wish to enroll or change their enrollment must complete a Health Benefits Registration form (Standard Form 2809). These forms are available from the Human Resources Office or the Remote Designee and **must be completed and submitted to one of these offices prior to the close of business on the last day of open season DECEMBER 11, 2000**. We do ask your assistance in making desired changes as early as possible in the open season.

New enrollments and changes in current enrollments elected during open season generally will become effective January 14, 2001. If you change plans, any covered expenses incurred between January 1, 2001 and the January 14, 2001 will count toward the 2000 deductible of the plan you are changing from.

Temporary continuation of Coverage (TCC): You should be aware that if you leave Federal employment, you are probably eligible for TCC (unless you are separated for gross misconduct). TCC can continue your enrollment for up to 18 months. TCC is also available for up to 36 months for dependents who lose eligibility as family members under your enrollment. This includes spouses who lose coverage because of divorce and children who lose coverage because they marry or reach age 22.

TCC enrollees must pay the total plan premium (without a Government contribution) plus a 2% charge for administrative expenses. There are specific time frames in which you or your dependent must enroll for TCC. Contact the HRO or Remote Designee for a copy of RI 79-27 to obtain additional information.

Please note information you provide by enrolling in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program may also be used for computer matching with Federal, State or local agencies' files to determine whether you qualify for benefits, payments or eligibility in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, Medicare, or other Government benefits programs.

Please refer questions to TSG Robert Gregori at (406) 841-3131/DSN 747-3131 or SSG Sharon Kaberline at (406) 841-3130/DSN 747-3130. Air Guard technicians may contact TSG Lisa Smith locally at x2243.

2001 FEHB Non-Postal Fee-for-Service Premium Rates

Fee-for-Service Plans (FFS)	2000 Total	2001 Biweekly premium rates
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Plan - Option - Enrollment Code			Biweekly Premium	Total Premium	Gov't Pays	Empl. Pays	Change in employee payment
Alliance Health Plan							
High Self	1R1		134.42	141.14	86.59	54.55	-1.04
High Family	1R2		284.97	299.22	195.82	103.40	-5.60
APWU Health Plan							
High Self	471		118.55	133.37	86.59	46.78	7.06
High Family	472		260.17	292.69	195.82	96.87	12.67
Blue Cross and Blue Shield							
High Self	101		145.12	156.73	86.59	70.14	3.85
High Family	102		310.32	335.14	195.82	139.32	4.97
Standard Self	104		108.87	120.85	86.59	34.26	4.22
Standard Family	105		242.75	276.73	195.82	80.91	14.13
GEHA Benefit Plan							
High Self	311		124.55	137.01	86.59	50.42	4.70
High Family	312		268.64	298.18	195.82	102.36	9.69
Standard Self	314		New Option	110.00	82.50	27.50	N/A
Standard Family	315		New Option	250.00	187.50	62.50	N/A
Mail Handlers							
High Self	451		124.26	133.58	86.59	46.99	1.56
High Family	452		262.10	281.76	195.82	85.94	-0.19
Standard Self	454		84.33	87.70	65.78	21.92	0.84
Standard Family	455		183.04	190.36	142.77	47.59	1.83
NALC							
High Self	321		125.70	135.60	86.59	49.01	2.14
High Family	322		268.63	289.74	195.82	93.92	1.26
Postmasters							
High Self	361		200.98	261.28	86.59	174.69	52.54
High Family	362		433.64	563.73	195.82	367.91	110.24
Standard Self	364		122.44	144.48	86.59	57.89	14.28
Standard Family	365		264.86	312.53	195.82	116.71	27.82
Association Benefit Plan							
High Self	421		116.26	127.54	86.59	40.95	3.52
High Family	422		267.80	293.78	195.82	97.96	6.13

SPECIAL NOTE: In the past, it was less expensive for two Federal Employees with no additional dependants to have two Self-Only Plans rather than one Family Plan. This is not longer true for all companies. Please compare rates carefully if you and your spouse are both eligible for the FEHB to determine which plan would be best for you. Also, do not base your decision as to which plan you want to carry on cost alone. Compare all the options, coverage, and availability of preferred providers

Office of Personnel Management Announcement regarding FEHB rate changes.

Washington, DC -- The U.S. Office of Personnel Management today announced 2001 premiums for the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), which covers approximately nine million employees, retirees and their families.

Nationwide, premiums for health insurance have been rising for several years and have outpaced inflation. Reflecting these trends, premiums for FEHBP Health Maintenance Organizations will increase an average 8.5 percent, while the more traditional Fee-for-Service plans will see an average increase of 10.9 percent. Weighted by population, the overall average increase will be 10.5 percent.

"Premiums are rising at unacceptable rates," said OPM Director Janice R. Lachance. "For 2001, we chose to raise premiums across the entire Program, rather than reduce benefits or take more money out of the pockets of those most in need of care. Keeping healthcare affordable, while maintaining a comprehensive benefits package, is a delicate balancing act."

On a positive note, starting next month, healthcare will be more affordable for Executive Branch employees because of premium conversion. OPM has taken a major step by adopting this plan, that lets employees pay their health insurance premiums with pre-tax dollars. In effect, premium conversion puts money in employees' pockets -- on average about \$434 per year.

Another significant Program improvement is Mental Health and Substance Abuse Parity. Beginning in January, nine million Americans covered by the FEHBP will have health insurance that provides the same co-payments for mental health conditions as for any other health condition, the same access to specialists, the same coverage for medication and the same coverage for out-patient care.

"We simply must meet the needs and the challenges of those suffering from mental health and substance abuse illnesses -- needs and challenges that throughout history have been neglected, misunderstood and stigmatized," Lachance said. This important new coverage will cost single enrollees less than \$0.50 biweekly; enrollees with family coverage will pay about \$1.00 biweekly

The largest contributor to the FEHBP premium increase is the rising cost of prescription drugs, which accounts for about 40 percent of the total rise. Other contributors include greater use of medical services, the expanded use of effective, but more expensive, medical technology, and an older population.

The new premiums go into effect in January 2001. FEHBP enrollees who have self-only coverage will pay about \$3.50 more biweekly, while those with family coverage will pay \$9.00 more biweekly. In 2001, the average biweekly premium for self-only coverage will be \$36.52 for the enrollee and \$83.74 for the agency. For family coverage, the average premium for the enrollee and agency will be \$80.16 and \$191.09, respectively. By comparison, the 2000 biweekly rate for self-only coverage is \$33.00 for the enrollee and \$76.34 for the agency. For family coverage, the rate is \$71.22 for the enrollee and \$172.26 for the agency.

In a recently released Washington Business Group on Health/Watson Wyatt Worldwide Survey, 61 large employers representing almost two million employees predict that medical costs in 2001 will increase by an average 12.2 percent for active employees and 13.3 percent for Medicare retirees. The survey findings confirm "healthcare costs are accelerating for the fourth year in a row with no slowdown in sight." Hewitt Associates, a leading benefit and management-consulting firm, said its clients anticipate premium increases averaging 14 percent nationally.

Active and retired participants in the California Public Employees Retirement System (CALPERS) Health Plan are facing an average increase of 12.9 percent. Last spring, CALPERS announced a 9.2 percent increase for its health maintenance plans and a 20 percent rise for those in the less-restrictive Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plan. CALPERS cover over one million employees, retirees and family members.

Similarly, John Colmers, executive director for the Maryland Health Care Commission, which oversees the benefits packages that insurers offer to small employers, said that the state actuaries expect increases of 9.6 percent for HMO premiums and 12 percent for PPOs. The State of Wisconsin just announced increases of up to 17.5 percent. Minnesota had a 19 percent increase and North Dakota a 24 percent jump.

"OPM's increases are lower than those seen by some other large organizations, but they reflect nationwide trends," commented Lachance. "While I'm dismayed that FEHB premiums will go up in January, I can say with pride that the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program continues to be a model.

"It stands out for simple but important features -- employees and retirees have the same benefits, the same choice of plans, and pay the same premiums. As the employer, the government pays a significant part of those premiums. We cover family members. We implemented the President's Patient Bill of Rights. We're committed to a healthcare system where patients are safe and receive the highest quality care.

"We are working hard to keep the FEHBP affordable. We assure our premium dollars are spent on benefits, not profits. All health plans in the Program are subject to rigorous audits by the OPM Inspector General, and we use any recoveries from audits to keep premiums lower," said Lachance.

Regarding initiatives to hold down premiums, the Director reported that, "OPM has consulted extensively with a broad range of stakeholders, including employee and retiree organizations. We have worked toward consensus on a package that will achieve two important goals. First, we want high-quality, cost-effective healthcare for our participants by raising the standards for health plans to participate in the Program. Then, we should have the flexibility to enhance benefits through direct contracting for selected benefits. These discussions have been open, useful and candid. We will continue to work with our stakeholders to reach consensus."

During the FEHBP open season, which runs from November 13 to December 11, eligible federal employees and retirees can stay with their current health plan or select a new one. Lachance encourages everyone to “do his or her homework.”

The FEHBP web page, <http://www.opm.gov/insure>, has a wealth of Open Season information, including PlanSmartChoice, an interactive tool to help select the health plan that best meets an individual’s needs. Lachance advises everyone to review the open season guide, visit the web site, and carefully read the health plan brochures. “Getting the quality healthcare you and your family deserve is about more than the premium you pay. Be sure the plan you choose suits your needs,” she said.

Comparing brochures will be easier this year. OPM and health plan representatives collaborated to re-format and re-write benefit descriptions. Every brochure, whether from an HMO or a Fee-for-Service plan, will be in the same format and describe benefits in plain language. “This delivers on an important commitment by OPM to make information more relevant and understandable,” Lachance said.

About 245 plans participate in the Program. There are seven fee-for-service plans that are open to any enrollee, worldwide. Most enrollees also can select from HMOs and point of service plans available locally. In the Washington, DC area, there are 13 plans from which to choose.

Thirty-five Health Maintenance Organizations have notified OPM that they will leave the Program in 2001. Approximately 54,000 individuals (about 1 percent of enrollees) must select a new health plan because of this. Plans that leave the program must tell each of their members that need to select a new plan during Open Season.

SECTION V – CLASSIFICATION/STAFFING

SMS WAYNE LOSING
SSG EDWINA STRAINER
SGT KEITH HERRIN

APPLYING FOR TECHNICIAN VACANCIES

Each KSA should be addressed individually, by treating the KSA’s like questions that need to be answered helps ensures that they are met in your application. For example; this knowledge, skill, or ability was gained by doing “what and for how long” (trained on, years of experience, OJT, etc.).

General and specialized experience should also be addressed individually and in the same manner. Pay particular attention to months of required specialized experience in the related field of experience and address them accordingly. AREA I applicants must submit a DMAMT Form 690-1-R, continuation pages may be included only for responses to Blocks 8, 9, & 10 of the application form. The HRO will use DMAMT Form 690-1-R to establish your basic eligibility.

AREA II applicants may submit one or a combination of the following: DMAMT-690-1-R, Optional Form 612, SF 171 or any other written format. If using a format different than the DMAMT-690-1-R have your application address all areas of importance (KSA's, generalized and specialized experience) that are on the DMAMT-690-1-R.

All Applicants will submit DMAMT Form 690-335-1 E (Application of Vacancy/Placement Action). **Note: Only one (1) 690-335-1 E is needed to be submitted with your application, submitting two (2) 690-335-1 E is no longer necessary.**

Note: Check that your application is COMPLETE, make sure that your application is signed, KSA's and general / specialized experience are addressed individually, and that required attachments (i.e. college transcripts, etc.) are included. It is recommended that you complete your application a few days prior to the closing date and have it reviewed for completeness and addressing of KSA's, general and specialized experience by a HRO representative. Having it completed a few days prior will give you time to make any changes or corrections.

APPLICATIONS must be sent to:

For Helena HRO-

**THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
STATE OF MONTANA
ATTN: HRO
P.O. BOX 4789
HELENA, MT. 59604-4789**

For Great Falls HRO

**THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
STATE OF MONTANA
ATTN: HRO
2800 AIRPORT AVE. B
GREAT FALLS, MT. 59404-5570**

Call (406) 841-3121/3122/3133, DSN 747-3121/3122/3133 for any additional information or clarification of application procedures.

SECTION VI – ACTIVE GUARD RESERVE

**MSG GARY MORGAN
SGT TIMOTHY MCCOY**



WELCOME TO SGT MCCOY

We would like to welcome SGT Tim McCoy to the AGR branch effective 16 October 2000. SGT McCoy is replacing SFC Crider and will assume his duties to include leave processing, finance processing, and managing the day-to-day tasks in the AGR branch. Until further notice those of you who e-mail your leave control number requests please e-mail them to gary.morgan@mtgrea.ang.af.mil. We are looking forward to having SGT McCoy in the AGR branch and I am sure he will provide the outstanding support he is known for.

EXTENSIONS (This is a repeat I don't seem to be making my point)

We still have some challenges in the area of extensions on the Army AGR program. Soldiers need to understand that unlike your M-Day soldiers once your ETS date comes and goes and you have failed to complete and return the required paperwork the pay system will automatically drop you. Congratulations to the Air AGRs for ensuring that your extensions are done in a timely manner.

Airmen need to ensure that they are in compliance with ANGI 36-101 prior to the expiration of their tour or face the possibility of non-renewal of tour.

Soldiers need to ensure that they are in compliance with AR 135-18, table 2-4, and NGR 600-200 prior to the expiration of their tour or face the possibility of non-renewal of tour.

Airmen/Soldiers are reminded that renewal of your tour is neither mandatory or guaranteed, it is your career; take a proactive interest in it.

FOR THE ADJUTANT GENERAL:

//signed//
JAMES D. HOGAN
LTC, AR, MTARNG
Human Resources Office

Distribution:
ARNG/ANG Intranet